

HEALTH

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BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR

YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1949

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PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

Medical Officer of Health :

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

Borough Engineer and Sanitary Inspector :

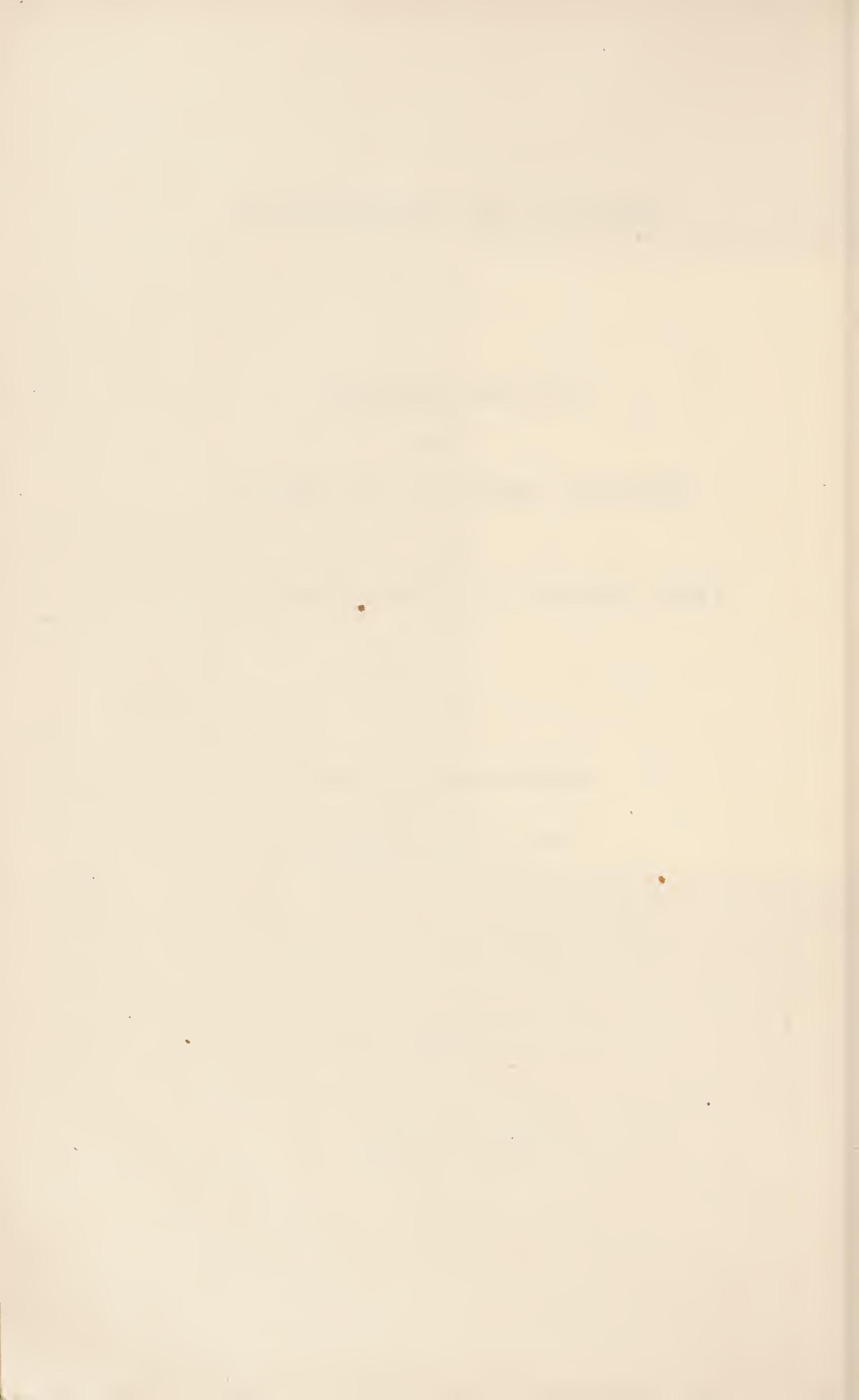
R. A. BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

Assistant to Sanitary Inspector :

E. FURSE.

Hon. Meteorologist :

ALDERMAN HARRY.



MR. MAYOR, ALDERMAN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year ended 31st December, 1949.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year although infectious cases were somewhat more numerous, however, no epidemic condition prevailed.

The population continues to rise slowly and over a period of 20 years has risen by some 700 persons. It is felt that the great obstacle to a more spectacular increase in population is lack of housing, as the Borough is ideally situated for the development of light industry and catering for workers within a reasonable distance.

The birth rate at 15.4 compares well with the average for a number of years.

The corrected death rate does not compare favourably with that for England and Wales and bears out the remarks made above that lack of housing and industry is driving the fecund population away from the town leaving only the advanced age group to carry on.



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SECTION A

General Statistics

Area (statute acres)	806
Population—1931 Census	3,307
Estimated Population—Mid 1949	4,020
Number of Inhabited Houses	1,097
Rateable Value	£24,547
Product of the Penny Rate	£97
Loan Debt	£54,087

Vital Statistics

	<i>Male.</i>	<i>Female.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Live Births	34	28	62
Legitimate	32	28	
Illegitimate	2	—	
<i>England and Wales</i>			
Birth Rate per 1,000 population	15.4		16.7
Still Births	3		
Still Birth Rate	0.75		0.39
	<i>Male.</i>	<i>Female.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Deaths	28	38	66
<i>England and Wales</i>			
Death Rate per 1,000 population	16.4		11.7
Corrected Death Rate	13.3		
Deaths from Maternal Causes	Nil		
Maternal Mortality	—		0.98
Deaths of Infants under 1 year	Nil		
Infant Mortality	—		32

The 66 deaths of the townsfolk were made up as follows :—

INFECTIOUS CAUSES :

Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1
Influenza	1

GENERAL CAUSES :

Cancer	12
Heart Disease	11
Cerebral Haemorrhage	8
Bronchitis	7
Nephritis	7
Coronary Thrombosis	4
Senility	4
Arteriosclerosis	2
Appendicitis	1
Asthma	1

Disease of the Liver	1
Gastric Ulcer	1
Pneumonia	1
Accidental	1
Other Causes	3
Total ..	<u>66</u>

Age of Death Table

<i>Age at Death.</i>	<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>
Infants under 1 year	—	—
1—5	—	—
5—15	—	—
15—25	—	1
25—35	—	—
35—45	1	—
45—55	2	2
55—65	2	3
65—75	10	14
75 and over	13	18
	<u>28</u>	<u>38</u>
Total ..	66	

SECTION B

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES

The year was the first full one after the implementation of the National Health Service Act, and much praise and criticism has naturally accrued. However, from the point of view of the general health of this district in particular, no noticeable change has occurred, although there is some evidence that certain sections of the population, particularly the women and some of the fixed lower income groups, including pensioners, have been better cared for, at least they have had the financial fear of approaching their doctor removed.

National Assistance Act, 1948—Section 47: No case was proceeded with under this section and it is felt that only in extreme cases should court action be necessary. There is, however, a great need for suitable accommodation for old people who by reason of age, infirmity, or other circumstances are not properly cared for. As a result of a questionnaire to the doctors practising in the district it was found that within the Borough and Rural Area 82 old persons were in need of this accommodation.

Hospital Administration : The area is covered by the Exeter and Mid Devon Hospital Management Committee and as far as can be ascertained the public are well satisfied with their treatment.

Apart from the above notes the general provisions of the health services remained as in the previous years.

SECTION C

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Water Supply.

Source : The source of the Borough water supply is as reported previously from the Black-a-Ven stream, and was entirely adequate for all needs of the town during the year, both in quantity and quality. The year under review was one of the driest ever recorded, nevertheless the water supply continued unlimited for domestic and commercial purposes. During the period of drought this record is remarkable as the Borough was virtually an oasis.

Rainfall : The Meteorologist supplied the following comparative figures for the Borough :—

	1949	1948	1947	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941
Cranmere	66.50	92.80	78.05	109.4	76.70	86.60	83.95	77.80	65.90
Newbridge	61.95	76.66	59.95	86.15	61.60	63.45	65.60	64.15	56.15
Filter Station	44.40	56.55	49.20	67.99	52.32	51.42	57.92	48.47	47.42
Dry Days (no rain)	176	158	188	105	180	178	142	174	177

The driest months were January, March and June, and the wettest September and October. There were long dry spells with absolute drought from June 10th to July 3rd, and others shorter. Falls of over 1" in one day were recorded in August, September and October when 1.80" fell on the 25th of that month, and over 1" on three other days. Of the total of 44.40", 16.68" fell in the two months October and November. These figures all refer to the Filter Station.

Filtration and Treatment : The plant has been in continuous operation throughout the year. Minor intermittent faults were remedied by the attendant in daily attendance. For the first time since installation in 1939 the pressure filter station interior was repainted and the several pipe systems were painted different appropriate colours. The filters overhauled in 1948 are in good condition. Filters are generally washed daily by high pressure air scour and kept up to a high operational standard which is essential owing to the intake of peaty solids. The treated water is clear, soft, colourless and of excellent taste. It is particularly pleasant both for personal and domestic washing. Analyses indicate it to be of satisfactory standard of purity both bacteriologically and chemically.

Distribution : The system of zoning the supply worked satisfactorily during the year. Mains were regularly flushed and leaks

repaired as discovered. The Council's plumber continues to give satisfactory service and before closing mains for repairs warnings are given to the public either by a loud speaker van or house to house calls. Cost of maintenance of the water services continues to fall owing to the equalised water pressure reducing wear and tear on the service pipes. New services have been provided for eight existing properties, three new private houses and six new houses at Ashely Road.

Rivers and Streams : The East and West Ockment rivers have generally remained self-cleansing and very clean. Solid rubbish is periodically removed. Minor intermittent pollutions from the Laundries have been remedied at short notice.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily with no serious defects. Trade effluent from the Gas Works has continued with little nuisance. Minor repairs were carried out on the East and West River sewers.

The enlarged sludge beds have been in operation throughout the year and have been most satisfactory. Additional labour was provided for the farmer for clearing and spreading the sludge. The works attendants weekly maintenance time has been increased. The irrigation channels were partially cleared. Effluent standards have been well maintained and no complaints as to river pollution have been received.

Public Cleansing—Refuse Collection and Disposal.

The Council's workmen have thoroughly scavenged the Borough which, in my opinion, is one of the cleanest small towns in the West Country. Rubbish collected is disposed of on the Council's refuse tip in North Road. This is much too close to a residential area and should be moved some distance into the country thus eliminating any fly nuisance. The fly nuisance was, however, considerably ameliorated by regular application of insecticide on the tip and the rats have been kept largely under control, but it is not possible to eliminate them owing to their seasonal migratory habits.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area.

Visits carried out by your Inspector during the year are set out hereunder :—

Houses	..	..	..	..	104
Houses <i>re</i> Housing		..	..	..	56
Drainage	..	..	..	..	42
Water Closets	..	..	..	..	15

Sewerage	..	..	..	..	..	17
Water Supply	..	..	..	..	..	73
Rivers	..	..	..	..	..	15
Refuse Disposal	..	..	..	..	..	29
Salvage	..	..	..	..	..	24
Refuse Disposal Tip	..	..	..	..	..	18
Tents and Vans	..	..	..	..	..	2
Schools	..	..	..	..	..	21
Infectious Diseases	..	..	..	..	..	-
Infestation	..	..	..	..	..	2
Rodents	..	..	..	..	..	21
Animals	..	..	..	..	..	5
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	..	..	19
Informal Notices	..	..	..	..	..	32
Remedied	..	..	..	..	..	24

Rodent Control.

In accordance with Ministry of Food requirements rodent control has been in operation throughout the year with the same part-time operator appointed and trained in 1947. Block control has been carried out where necessary throughout the area. In addition the whole of the sewers were tested for infestation, and the minimum of infestation was discovered. The incidence of infestation in the area continues to decline and control is effectively keeping it down to these desirable limits.

Smoke Abatement.

Four minor cases of smoke emersion were dealt with by informal action and one informal notice was issued.

Fish Frying.

There are two small fish frying shops, and one bigger fish frying shop and café in the Borough, which have been well conducted. Informal action was necessary in one case.

Offensive Trades.

At the two establishments five inspections were made.

Swimming Pools.

The swimming pool and paddling pool, both of which are supplied by continuous running water, have been well maintained and conducted. In addition the pools are emptied and cleaned periodically during the season and periodically lightly chlorinated.

Factories Acts, 1937 and 1948.

1. INSPECTIONS.

<i>Premises</i> (1)	<i>Number on Register</i> (2)	<i>Number of</i>		
		<i>Inspections</i> (3)	<i>Written Notices</i> (4)	<i>Occupiers Prosecuted</i> (5)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	28	34	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	10	7	—	—
(iii) Other Premises	—	—	—	—
TOTAL	38	41	—	—

2. CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.

<i>Particulars</i> (1)	<i>Number of cases in which defects were found</i>				<i>Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted</i> (6)
	<i>Found</i> (2)	<i>Remedied</i> (3)	<i>Referred</i> <i>To H.M. Inspector</i> (4)			By H.M. Inspector (5)
Want of Cleanliness	3	3	—	—	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature....	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences :					
(a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective	—	—	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes....	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences....	2	2	—	—	—
TOTAL	5	5	—	—	—

SECTION D

HOUSING

In the opinion of the writer the housing situation was entirely unsatisfactory during the year, practically no progress being made. This is particularly regrettable as apart from the fact that housing is at the moment a superlative task, the future existence of the Borough depends on its success.

Mr. Brunskill has supplied the following report on housing.

“During the year further nominal maintenance repairs and painting works have been carried out on the pre-war houses in Macey’s Terrace and Brayham’s Terrace Estates. Houses are completely overhauled, re-decorated and cleansed on each change of tenancy.

Further minor works were carried out in the fourteen additional family units provided by the requisitioning and conversion of properties.

On the Lower Brayham’s and Brickfield Temporary Housing Estates, the twenty-five houses had minor maintenance repair works.

Site works on the Lower Brayham’s and Brickfield Temporary Housing Sites had been completed by the tarmac surfacing of the service road and subsequent surface dressing. In accordance with Council policy additional allotments adjoining the houses were laid out for the tenants requiring them.

On the Far View Permanent Housing Estate site works, including the building up of boundary hedges and dry walling, were continued as materials and labour became available.

On the Savile Mead Estate six U-Type traditional brick houses were commenced in August, 1948, and were in progress at the beginning of 1949. Work on them proceeded throughout the year and at the end of 1949 four were completed and the remaining two were finished and occupied in January and February, 1950.

In addition tenders were obtained for an additional 8 Type C1 and C2 and 2 Type U permanent brick houses, and prices for these were found to be too high for acceptance, and negotiations with a view to their reduction were in progress at the end of the year.”

SECTION E

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

Milk.

Ten inspections of cowsheds, dairies and milkshops were made during the year and informal notices were given. Generally the standard of cleanliness continued good and in some cases very good. Since October, 1949, the supervision of farms and milk-producing premises has been taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Local Authority are now only responsible for the supervision of dairies and milkshops.

The following samples of milk were taken during the year :—

<i>Grade.</i>	<i>Total Samples Taken</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Failed</i>
Accredited	8	7	1
Tuberculin Tested School ..	2	1	1
Ungraded	38	34	4
	—	—	—
Totals	48	42	6
	==	==	==

Food Premises.

In connection with the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, Section 13, and following upon your Medical Officer's circular to all food shops, special attention has been given to these premises. The standard of cleanliness has been well maintained. In some cases particular pride appears to be taken in maintaining a high standard of hygiene. The policy of lighter and brighter colours, such as cream and white, in the decoration of shops and premises where food is handled is to be encouraged. Dirt cannot go undetected for long against these backgrounds.

Bakehouses and Meat Shops : These premises have been well maintained and most tradesmen take a pride in the cleanliness of their premises. Inspections were made but no action was necessary.

The Council resolved to adopt the new Model Bye-laws as circulated by the Ministry of Food regarding the handling, wrapping and delivery of food, and sale of food in the open air.

Food Poisoning.

Four cases were notified during the year. Three were in one family and were extremely severe, the patients being very ill for some days. It was considered on inquiry that the condition arose from the consumption of duck eggs. The fourth case notified was not considered by your M.O.H. to be attributable to food poisoning.

Meat.

The Tavistock Urban District Council have authorised the inclusion of the subjoined table of meat inspection at their Abattoir from whence you derive your meat :—

Carcases Inspected and Condemned

	<i>Cattle excluding cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed (if known	1707	942	1457	7474	451
Number inspected	1707	942	1457	7474	451
<i>All diseases except Tuberculosis :</i>					
Whole carcasses condemned	10	29	40	81	8
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned.... ..	1081	665	14	1615	30
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis	63.91 %	73.67 %	3.77 %	22.69 %	8.42 %
<i>Tuberculosis only :</i>					
Whole carcasses condemned	12	42	8	—	5
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned.... ..	93	155	—	—	34
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	6.15 %	20.91 %	0.54 %	—	8.64 %

Other Foodstuffs.

Foods have been examined and twenty-one condemnation certificates have been issued covering in nearly all cases foods which had deteriorated owing to defective containers.

Action taken under the Food and Drugs Act by the County Inspector.

Twenty samples were taken in the Borough under the Food and Drugs Act during the year. Fifteen samples were of milk and all were genuine. The average butter fat content was 3.82% and non fatty solids 8.96%.

Of the five samples taken of other foods all were genuine and there were no complaints.

SECTION F

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASE

The following cases of infectious disease were notified by practitioners :—

Measles	..	..	..	..	..	55
Pneumonia	..	..	..	..	..	11
Whooping Cough	..	..	..	..	..	8
Scarlet Fever	..	..	..	..	..	2
Acute Poliomyelitis	..	..	..	..	..	1
Erysipelas	..	..	..	..	..	1

The following cases of infectious disease were notified by the schools :—

Mumps	..	..	..	..	..	43
Measles	..	..	..	..	..	14
Chicken Pox	..	..	..	..	..	1
Scarlet Fever	..	..	..	..	..	1

It will be seen that nothing in the nature of an epidemic occurred during the year although the notifications of infectious disease were more numerous than of recent years.

Acute Poliomyelitis : One case of this disease occurred in a youth who had been attending a holiday camp and he was lucky in so far that he made a very good recovery. There was no spread of the disease in the Borough which bears out the contention which I made elsewhere that the disease is in some way associated with insanitary conditions. As your Council is well aware the Borough is maintained in a state of very good hygiene, however, in order that no loopholes should be allowed, general disinfection of drains and accumulations of possible sources of infection were carried out.

Diphtheria : No case of this disease occurred during the year which has been the experience over several years. This I attribute to the excellent response we have had in the past to immunisation. This was the first full year that the immunisation service was the responsibility of the County Council. I am still of the opinion that the procedure would be more efficiently organised on a local basis. All possible assistance has, however, been afforded the County Officer in the execution of these duties.

Tuberculosis : Two cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year and 24 cases remained on the register at the end of the year.

This disease appears to have taken on a strange new propensity in so far that the incidence now falls on adult males of the middle age group. This is not peculiar to this district only but universal and is the subject of much speculation.

An investigation was carried out as to the social strata chiefly affected by the disease by analysing the rateable value of the domicile. It was found that the average rateable value of the houses occupied by sufferers was 11.2. If a comparable group of measles notifications is taken as a control group, it being well known that this disease attacks all classes at random, it is found that the scatter of measles is $3\frac{1}{2}$ times that of tuberculosis round their respective means which tends, in my opinion, to show that the generally accepted view in the past that tuberculosis was related to poor housing and low income still holds today. This bears out the contention that considerable priority should obtain in housing these sufferers.

In conclusion I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.



